CBS
NEWS
A Division of CBS Inc.
524 West 57 Street
New York, New York 10019
(212) 765-4321

Dear Mrs. Mummert: October 3, 1975

I think it only fair for me to answer your letter to Dan Rather regarding "The Guns of Autumn," but I assure you he will see it when he returns from his current assignment.

I am both moved and saddened by your response to the broadcast, as much as I am disturbed by your assumptions and false impressions about its purpose and content.

It is not the role of CBS News to take a positive or a negative position on any subject, but to report the truth as we find it and to report it accurately. I assure you that this was done in "The Guns of Autumn."

No one was misled. No one was filmed without his or her permission (including your son, whose father signed a release for his participation in the broadcast), no scenes were staged or misrepresented, and there was no attempt to either use or not use any footage to serve a particular point of view. There was no selective filming, or editing, of the kind you've suggested.

In every instance, the locations selected for filming followed consultation either with a sportsman's organization, a state game agency or the hunting press and literature. In the case of the bear hunt near Escanaba, it was recommended to us by the Michigan United Conservation Club whose spokesman described Mr. Mummert as "one of the best bear hunters in Michigan." I had every reason to assume that both the MUCC and Mr. Mummert regarded this hunt as a positive example of the hunting experience in America. We made every effort to have the hunter himself explain the benefits of hunting and why he does it.

The broadcast opened with the statements of hunters, giving many reasons for why they hunt. No one mentioned killing. Additional statements by hunters are heard throughout the broadcast, again giving many reasons for hunting. Few of them ever mention killing and none give killing as their only reason for hunting.

The values held by you or your family were not questioned by me or in the broadcast. I was personally impressed with both your husband and your son. We in fact pointed out in the broadcast that hunting is very much a heritage of man, both historically and anthropologically.

There were also specific references in the broadcast with respect to game management, all of them taken from authoritative sources on the subject: Aldo Leopold's book of Game Management, the Wildlife Management Institute in Washington D.C. and from others who support game management. There is a debate among sincere men and women as to the function and role of game management, but we did not get into that debate. We simply stated, in its own words, how it defines itself. We also did not cover the excesses and extremes of hunting. Had that been our purpose, it would have been easily fulfilled by examining the various forms of poaching (wildlife shot out of season, exceeding bag limits, spotlighting, etc.) as well as many other practices and consequences of hunting such as the use of tree stands and towers; illegal baiting; the use of vehicles to spot, chase and shoot wildflie; shooting from roads; the countless numbers of wildlife wounded and crippled each year and not recovered; the estimated four-million ducks and geese which die from lead poisoning each year; the tresspassing and vandalism. None of this was covered or even mentioned in "The Guns of Autumn." Everything filmed is legal in the state it occurrs and is ethical according to the hunter's code of the NRA.

We also did not cover what game management, by its own definition, is not -- namely, animal husbandry, the killing of domestic animals for food. Vegetarianism, as Mr. Leopold agrees, has nothing to do with hunting, or game management -- the harvesting of a man-made surplus of wildlife for recreation. There have been other broadcasts about the balance of nature, about endangered species, about wildlife. "The Guns of Autumn" was about the hunter, and hunting in contemporary America; and there was not a single anti-hunter in the program.

The broadcast also did not "knock the junior shooting programs," which were not covered. What was covered was National Hunting and Fishing Day, an event promoted by hunters and their spokesmen.

October 3, 1975

Mrs. Mummert, I genuinely appreciate your feelings and welcome your views. I am sincere in my appreciation for the courtesy and hospitality extended to us by your husband and the members of his camp and I regret that what we found to be true, and reported, is at odds with your feeling about hunting.

I am enclosing a copy of a letter being sent to viewers critical of the broadcast. I should add that we have also received a great many letters from men and women not critical of the broadcast -- including many from those who hunt, or have hunted.

Sincerely,

Irv Drasnin
Producer

Mrs. Betty Mummert
R#2, Box 69M
Gaylord, MI 49735

Enclosure

October 3, 1975

Dear Mrs. Mummert:

~~Since Dan Rather has been away on assignment since your letter arrived, I am~~

I think it only fair for me to answer your letter to Dan Rather regarding "The Guns of Autumn," but I assure you he will see it when he returns from his current assignment.

I am both moved and saddened by your response to the broadcast, as much as I am disturbed by your assumptions and false impressionsabout its purpose and content.

It is not the role of CBS News to take a positive or a negative position on any subect, but to report the truth as we find it and to report it accurately. I assure you that this was done in "The Guns of Autumn."

No one was misled. No one was filmed without his or her permission (including your son, whose father signed a release for his participation in the broadcast), no scenes were staged or misrepresented, and there was

~~[redacted]~~

no attempt to either use or not use any footage to serve a particular point of view. ~~except that of the hunters.~~ There was no selective filming, or editing, of the kind you've suggested.

In every instance, the locations selected for filming followed consultation either with a sportsman's organization, a state game ageny or the hunting press and literature. In the case of the bear hunt near Escanaba, it was recommended to us by the Michigan United Conservation Club whose spokesman described Mr. Mummert as "one of the best bear hunters in Michgian." I had every reason to assume that both the MUCC and Mr. Mummert regarded this hunt as a positive example of the hunting experience in America. We made every effort to have the hunter himself explain the benefits of hunting and why he does it.

~~I believe that a reading of the script of the broadcast would prove that~~

Many reasons for hunting were made by hunters during the broadcast and very few of them mentioned killing. In fact none of them gave killing as their only reason for hunting. And I can assure you that ~~in the various kinds of hunting filmed there is not a single instance of a hunter deciding not to kill a bear or animal.~~ There was no selective filming or editing of the kind you're suggested.

insert -- substitute last, handwritten, paragraph of mummert letter

The broadcast opened with the statements of hunters, giving many reasons for why they hunt. Not one mentioned killing. Additional statements by hunters are heard throughout the broadcast, again giving many reasons for hunting. Few of them ever mention killing and none give killing as their only reason for hunting.

Neither I nor did the broadcast question the values held by you or your family. I was personally impressed with both your husband and your son. We in fact pointed out in the broadcast that hunting is very much a heritage of man, both historically and anthropologically.

There were also specific references in the broadcast with respect to game management, all of them taken from authoritative sources on the subject: Aldo Leopold's book of Game Management, the Wildlife Management Institute in Washington D.C. and from others who support game managemrnt. There is a debate among sincere men and women as to the function and role of game management, but we did not get into that debate. We simply stated, in its own words, how it defines itself. We also did not cover the excesses and extremes of hunting. Had that been our purpose, it would have been easily fulfilled by examining the various forms of poaching (wildlife shot out of season, exceeding bag limits, spotlighting, shooting from roads, etc.) as well as many other practices and consequences of hunting such as the use of tree stands and towers; illegal baiting; the use of vehicles to spot, chase and shoot wildlife; the countless numbers of wildlife wounded and crippled each year and not recovered; the estimated four-million ducks and geese which die from lead poisoning each year; the tresspassing and vandalism. None of this was covered or even mentioned in "The Guns of Autumn." Everything filmed is legal in the state it occurs and is ethical according to the hunter's code of the NRA.

We also did not cover what game management, by its own definition, is not -- namely, animal husbandry, the killing of doesmtic animals for food. Vegetarianism, as Mr. Leopold agrees, has nothing to do with hunting, or game management -- the harvesting of a man-made surplus of wildlife for recreation. There have been other broadcasts about the balance of nature, about endangered species, about wildlife. "The Guns of Autumn" was about the hunter, and hunting in contemporary America; and there was not a simgle anti-hunter in the program.

The broadcast also did not "knock the junior shooting programs", which were not covered. What was covered was National Hunting and Fishing Day, an event promoted by hunters and their spokesmen.

Mrs. Mummert, I genuinely appreciate your feelings and welcome your views. I am sincere in my appreciation for the courtesy and hospitality extended to us by your husband and the members of his camp and I regret that what we found to be true, and reported, is at odds with your feelings about hunting.

I am enclosing a copy of a letter being sent to viewers critical of the broadcast. I should add that we have also received a great many letters from men and women not critical of the broadcast — including many from those who hunt, or have hunted.